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FRENCH'S MINOR DRAMA

The Acting Edition

THE BURGLAR AND THE JUDGE

A COMEDIETTA IN ONE ACT

BY

F. C. PHILIPS AND CHARLES H. E. BROOKFIELD

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THE BURGLAR AND THE JUDGE.

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MR. JUSTICE GYVES.....
PARKHURST.....
JOE.....

The scene represents a handsomely furnished dining-room. Oak fireplace, C., with oil painting of SIR GEOFFREY GYVES. Window, L. C., with street backing. Shutters closed. Door, R. C., with hall backing and staircase. Cellarette, R. Writing-table, L. Easy-chairs and occasional chairs. Table in front of fireplace, with spirit case, glasses, cigars, etc. A clock with a loud, slow tick. A lamp and candles are burning. A good fire, which goes down to a glow. Clock on mantel-piece.

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THE BURGLAR AND THE JUDGE.

When the curtain rises, GYVES is discovered in evening dress asleep in easy-chair, R., of fireplace.

Enter PARKHURST, with parcel. He crosses to writing-table, where he deposits parcel.

PARKHURST. His lordship's asleep ! That's a good job ! He hasn't missed me, then. I just adjourned for ten minutes over the way, and took a nice glass of sloe gin at the "Faithful Hound." A very pleasant gentleman that was I met there, too ! Tells me he's in the stable, and they don't mean winning with "Steamroller" after all ; and I'm to have a bit on his stable companion "Spoof." (*Sits, looks at GYVES, takes out betting book.*) I can get thirty threes to-morrow, he tells me—thirty-three dollars—that's £8 5s. 0d. The course ought to suit him—I see it when me and his lordship was down for the Chester Assizes. Lord ! how drowsy I do feel, to be sure !—as if we'd been hearing appeals all through a July afternoon. (*Yawns.*) I must pack his lordship off to bed—litter him down nice and snug—and then follow his example. We've got to be in court to-morrow at ten, and catch the night express to Swansea. A nasty, tiring day ! I sha'n't tell him to-night about his robes coming home from the cleaner's, else he'll be wanting to try 'em on, to see how the new ermine looks, and I'm a great deal too sleepy to. (*Yawns.*) O Lord ! O Lord ! (*Crosses to GYVES.*) Beg pardon, Sir Geoffrey. (*Touches him on shoulder.*) Time to wake up, Sir Geoffrey.

* GYVES (*wakes, blinks and commences very blandly*). Ah ! Well, gentlemen of the jury, is it for you to decide. If you believe the witnesses for the prosecution you will be obliged to return a verdict of guilty against the prisoner at the bar, whereas if you attach credence to the—

PARK. It's all right, Sir Geoffrey ; you're at home in Grosvenor Place.

GYVES. Ah ! God bless my soul, so I am ! I was so very comfortably asleep. I quite thought for the moment I was administering justice.

PARK. You'll be going to bed now, I suppose, Sir Geoffrey ?

GYVES. Certainly, Parkhurst. Put out the lights, and give me my bed-candle. Stay, where are my notes? I have to pass sentence, have I not, in the Pennyfather murder?

PARK. Manslaughter, they brought it in, Sir Geoffrey. ²

GYVES. Manslaughter, did they? Most improper! I summed up for murder.

PARK. You'll find your notes by your bedside, Sir Geoffrey, by the side of your barley-water.

GYVES. Ah! that's well. I'll consider my sentence as I'm dropping off to sleep. Have they sent my robes?

PARK. Yes, Sir Geoffrey. (*Undoes parcel.*)

GYVES. Ah! that's well. I felt extremely ill at ease in Brother Bulkley's. Indeed, I felt almost insignificant.

PARK. I assure you, you didn't look so, Sir Geoffrey. ³

GYVES. No judge can look insignificant, Parkhurst. He is aggrandized with the majesty of the law.

PARK. Quite so, Sir Geoffrey.

GYVES. Have they quite removed the stain, Parkhurst?

PARK. The port-wine stain, Sir Geoffrey? Yes. it's quite gone.

GYVES. Let me see. (*PARKHURST helps him on with robes.*) I'll make an example of young Pennyfather to-morrow, if it's only to annoy the jury. How dare they return a verdict at variance with my direction?

PARK. That wasn't Pennyfather's fault, Sir Geoffrey. ⁴

GYVES. That, Parkhurst, is beside the question. Besides which, I have little doubt he was in sympathy with them.

PARK. You see, Sir Geoffrey, it was to save his mother that he struck the man.

GYVES. That, again, Parkhurst, has nothing to do with the point at issue. It is sufficient to know that, prompted by whatsoever emotions in the first instance, the prisoner came to the place where the deceased was intent to commit a felonious act, which act resulted in homicide. You can't turn that into manslaughter, Parkhurst, even were the crime committed in defence of fifty thousand mothers.

PARK. I suppose we couldn't, Sir Geoffrey. (*Yawns.*)

GYVES. Leniency—don't yawn, Parkhurst—

PARK. Beg pardon, Sir Geoffrey.

GYVES. Leniency is only another word for weak-mindedness. A judge should not know the meaning of the word. Crimes are committed by members of the criminal classes, who are so differently constituted from ourselves that their actions must be judged from a totally different standpoint.

PARK. I suppose then, Sir Geoffrey, if a man's born a criminal, he's not responsible when he commits a crime?

GYVES. On the contrary, Parkhurst, every member of the

community who is *compos mentis* is responsible to the State for his actions, and is amenable to the law of the land. Only there is a race as distinct as the Aztecs or Pigmies, which we call the Criminal Classes, who habitually commit what we call crimes. These are frequently due to the unhappy prevalence of betting and gambling. I am glad to know, Parkhurst, that you have no such tendencies.

PARK. You know me, Sir Geoffrey !

GYVES. I think so, Parkhurst. I should not be fitted for the position I occupy were I not an exceptionally shrewd judge of character.

PARK. I've never known you to make a mistake, Sir Geoffrey.

GYVES. Well, I may have made a few in my time, but not many. (PARKHURST *helps him off with robes.*) Thank you, Parkhurst. Now the gentle classes cannot perpetrate crimes—because—because—

PARK. Because they're not built that way, Sir Geoffrey ?

GYVES. Well, yes, because they are not so constituted. It is little personal credit to me that I have led a blameless life—that I am not a gambler or a debauchee or a cruel man. It is simply my good fortune that I was born *magni nominis umbra*. You're yawning again !

PARK. I'm very sorry, Sir Geoffrey. I can't think what's come over me. I feel so terribly drowsy.

GYVES. You make me yawning too, confound you ! Where's my candle ? (PARKHURST *gives him candle.*) Call me at half-past seven. — Get me some soft herring's roes and a few larks on toast for breakfast. Good-night, Parkhurst. (*Yawns.*)

PARK. Good-night, Sir Geoffrey. (*Yawns.*) Hope you'll have a comfortable night, Sir Geoffrey.

GYVES. I'm sure of that. The sleep of the just, Parkhurst—the sleep of the just ! (*Yawns and exits.*)

PARK. (*replacing robes and wig in box, and extinguishing lights.*) Thank goodness his lordship's toddled off to bed at last. I never in all my life wanted my bed so bad ! (*Yawns.*) O Lor ! I can't bother about taking no candlesticks and spoons and forks to bed with me. Besides, house-breakers ain't so keen on meeting his lordship, that they'd trouble to pay him an informal visit at this time of night ! [*Exit.*]

(*A long pause, during which the fire goes down to a glow, and nothing is heard but the ticking of the clock. The orchestra plays [pizz and mutes], "Nix, my Dolly, pals, fake away" [Jack Sheppard]. A faint sound is heard at the window. The shutters open and enter JOE, who comes down cautiously.*)

JOE. Phew ! We've arrived ! You'll see it in the Mornin'

Post to-morrow mornin'. "Mr. Saveloy Joe has left his country seat, near Wokin', and arrived in town for the London season." How about address? "Mr. Saveloy Joe will be the temp'ry guest of Mr. Justice Gyves." That's to rights! How are we fixed? (*Goes round room and listens.*) All snug! I think I'll risk a glim. His lordship's upstairs in a room ten sizes too large for him, sleepin' the sleep of a lord chief-justice, on a feather bed with sheets to it, I shouldn't wonder, dreamin' of angels and prison chaplains and such like. Lor! what it is to be well off! While the wealthy are takin' their rest, the submerged tenth—to wit, your humble servant—has to be hard at work earnin' his nightly bread! (*Sees spirit case.*) Lord bless his lordship! he hasn't forgotten his poorer brethren. (*Opens decanter and smells it.*) Irish! I'm in luck to-night. (*Pours out whiskey.*) Long live Ireland! (*Drinks.*) I wanted that badly. That fairly scratches where it itches. Yes, but how about the solids? I've had nothin' to eat but a ha'penny fagot and a nice drop of pork gravy since I left the Jug yesterday mornin'; and there ain't much nourishment—not to speak of—not in ha'penny fagots. (*Goes to cellarette, looks contemptuously at lock.*) That ain't worth bluntin' good tools over. (*Butts it open with his head. Brings out pâté de foie gras, pickles, camembert cheese, etc.*) What's all this muck? Furrin! Bly me! if I was drawin' my pay from British taxpayers, the least I'd do would be to encourage British industry. (*Cuts a large hunk of bread, then looks at pots.*) Patter de forgror! I suppose they likes furrin names to their grub. It gives 'em an appetite guessin' what they mean! (*Takes up the cheese.*) Pah! It hums a bit! But I suppose that's meant. The swells likes their grub a bit gamy, so I've heard. But this 'ere! Lor! it's fit to stop a bloomin' clock! Now, how's a bloke to know which to put on his toke first? I dare say it tells yer on the jar, on'y it's all in furrin patter. If I'd French Charley workin' along with me—him what's doin' five stretch over them there bonds—he'd reel it off like slidin' down a water-pipe! Well, we'll try a bit of the violet cream first. (*Helps himself to camembert.*) Then a nice bit of hot pickle. (*Helps himself to pickle.*) And top it up with some of this 'ere Dutch butter. (*Helps himself to pâté de foie gras. Fills his mouth.*) Not so dusty! Still it's what I terms an accrued taste. (*Noise upstairs.*) Phew! Douse the glim! (*Blows out candle and hides behind table.*)

(*Creaking steps are heard coming downstairs, and an increasing ray of light. Enter GYVES in night-cap and dressing-gown, with an electro-plated flat candle-stick in one hand, and a very small drawing-room poker in the other.*)

GYVES. I'm sure I heard some one moving ! I wish I hadn't sent my poodle off to be shaved. He'd have settled any one—if there be any one. But it's probably only Parkhurst, who may have fallen asleep, and who perhaps—

JOE (*pinions GYVES, and grins over his shoulder*). It's on'y me, guv'ner !

GYVES. Hullo ! Here ! Help ! Murder !

JOE (*through his teeth, and shaking him*). Come—not so much of it—not so much of it ! You keep that ugly old jaw of yours steady, else I shall get nasty !

GYVES (*breaking away from him*). You infernal scoundrel ! One step forward, and—I give you due legal warning—I'll annihilate you ! (*Brandishes poker.*)

JOE. Persevere, old gent ! persevere ! You have a try ! (*Puts his head down to be struck.*) You hit me as hard as ever you can with that there toothpick of yours—it'll hurt your wrist a jolly sight more'n it'll hurt my head.

GYVES. You infamous villain ! I insist upon your giving me your name.

JOE. Go on away, guv'ner ! You know me right enough ! You know me as well as you know brown sherry. We've been introduced often enough. The first time—Lor bless my soul !—the first time was eight-and-twenty year ago, when I was a kiddy, and you was just workin' your way. I'd prigged a pair of boots, I had. My word ! Didn't you pile it up for me ! Any one'd thought I'd cleared out the Bank of England, by the way you talked ! “Pest of society !” “Determined criminal !” “Desperate character !” Me ! a kiddy not ten years old. A cruel, cold-blooded little cormorant yer was, even in yer juvenile days. But dad and his pals they clubbed together, and got the dear old sergeant to speak up for me. God bless him ! he had a heart, if ever a man had. And when you'd coughed away all the spleen and bile you'd got in your little parched-up carcase, he got up with a pleasant smile and a twinkle in his eye—he turned to the jury, and he just laughed it off. Lord, it was like the sun comin' out after a storm of hail !

GYVES. You impudent scoundrel ! Of course I know your face now.

JOE. Well, you ought to do, anyway. Joe's my name—“Saveloy Joe,” they calls me. You knows me and I knows you !

GYVES. “Saveloy Joe”—ah ! yes, of course ! Joseph Searle, one of the most desperate ruffians I've ever had to deal with ! You dirty blackguard, if you don't—

JOE. Now, don't you splutter and spit, you silly little farthing squib ! Just you keep quiet and civil for once in your

life, and you'll be all right. Ah ! ring the bell, would yer ? Try that again, and I'll wring yer old neck for yer.

GYVES. If you take my advice, my man, you'll leave my house in double-quick time !

JOE (*pleasantly*). Ah ! You always like to get rid of me in a hurry. No, I ain't a-goin' to leave your house just yet, and it ain't no good your callin' the servants. Your cook and your parlor-maid and your house-maid, they went to the music hall to-night—unbeknown to you—and they met a particular friend of mine there, and they won't be home till mornin'. And old Parkhurst—ha ! ha ! Old Parkhurst ! Wherever did you pick him up, my lord ? On the mud at South End, at low tide, I should say. He's a champion old fly-flat, he is ! Well, he's asleep upstairs, dreamin' he's skinned the lamb over the Chester cup, with two drams of laudanum inside of him, what he took with his gin just now.

GYVES. Do you mean to tell me that my servants are persons of no character ? That—

JOE. Here, stow it, guv'ner ! You ain't on your bloomin' old red easy-chair now. I've often had to put up with hearin' yer talk when I wasn't in the mood ; now you've got to put up with hearin' me. Sit down.

(GYVES *seats himself* L. of table. JOE *goes to chimney-piece to fetch cigars.*)

GYVES (*aside*). I don't suppose that a judge of the High Court was ever placed in so perilous and abnormal a position since the beginning of the world !

JOE. First of all, let's make ourselves comfortable. I expects yer weeds is good. (*Smells them.*) They've got a good nose to 'em. I likes the miff of yer baccy better'n I likes the miff of yer cheese, Geoffrey. (*Extracts a large cigar, rolls it over his tongue, bites the end off, and lights it.*)

GYVES (*aside*). The dirty wretch ! Cigars the Baron gave me ! Worth three shillings each if they're worth a penny !

JOE (*helps himself to grog*). Have a glass along of me, guv'ner !

GYVES (*starting up*). What ! You dare to suggest that I should sit and hob-nob with you, a criminal, an ex-convict, a—

JOE. Now, gently does it, old 'un ! Lose yer temper to yer heart's content, but remember the laws of hospitality ! And don't insult the guest upon yer hearth ! You've got to humor me, else ten to one I shall get nasty !

GYVES (*aside*). What on earth am I to do ? (*Aloud.*) It is impossible for me to accede to your desire. I—I have already had my quantum.

JOE. Well, I have a drop more quantum.

GYVES. I can only drink a very limited amount of whiskey, and that I have already consumed.

JOE. Well, then (*produces flat bottle from his pocket*), have a drop of old Tom—that won't hurt you.

GYVES. I will do nothing of the kind! What, drink your foul gin out of a bottle which you have very likely put to your lips! Why, I'd sooner—

JOE. Have a drop of old Tom. Now, do as I tell yer. 3

GYVES. Certainly not! I'll—

JOE. Do as I tell yer! Have a drop of old Tom. Have a drop. (*GYVES helps himself meekly.*) Now, have a smoke.

GYVES. I have no wish to smoke, sir.

JOE. Never mind about wishin'. We can't always do as we wish in this bloomin' world. (*GYVES reaches to cigars.*) No, not them! You'd had your quantum of them! They'll stop yer growin' if yer smokes too many of them. Have a pipe; it's better for yer! (*Offers him a filthy cutty.*)

GYVES. This is too much! I've not had a pipe in my mouth since I blew bubbles as a boy! And to sully my lips with a filthy housebreaker's clay pipe—

JOE (*angrily*). Have a pipe! (*GYVES, after a moment's pause, lights the pipe.*) Now, we're all happy and sociable. Here's success to crib-cracking!

GYVES. No, I absolutely refuse! I will not participate any further in this revolting revel.

JOE. Go on, guv'ner! You've got to drink it! The more you looks at it, the less you'll like it.. Success to crib-cracking!

GYVES (*at last*). Well, the—success to—er—crib-cracking. (*Drinks.*)

JOE. Ah! now, that's better. Now, you know, Geoffrey, you've more to thank me for than what you think of. I've two pals with me in this job. One on 'em's an old friend of yours, what you gave four-and-twenty to not so long ago—Parsimonious Phil we calls him. He was all for tying you up to the bedpost, shovin' a towel in yer old kissin'-trap, and givin' yer four dozen. He'd a done it, too—straight—if I hadn't a-stopped him. I says, "No," I says. "No unnecessary violence; his lordship's a fellow creature," I says, "for all he's a beak."

GYVES. You cowardly scoundrels! Not long ago you would all have swung for this!

JOE (*with a broad grin*). That job would have suited you, Geoffrey. Can't I see yer at it—rollin' it off yer chest—"Place from whence you came—proper place of execution," and all the rest of the patter. I've heard you never seem to fancy yer dinner so hearty as after a good hangin' match. You a

judge ! Ugh ! Whatever was her blessed Majesty about ? She must have been out of town just the week you was appointed !

GYVES. I will not bandy words with you, you ruffian. Take what you want and leave me.

JOE. How long have you been a judge ? What, you won't answer ?

GYVES. Nine years.

JOE. Nine years ! And how many fellow-creatures have you turned off in that time ? Over a hundred, I'll lay a dollar—for you took to the work natural from the start, and you never missed hangin' your half-score a year. Wait a bit. I'll show you a curiosity. (*Produces a piece of rope, which he toys with.*) This 'ere bit of hemp's a family relic. It's what Mr. Berry hanged a pore old uncle of mine with—one from whom I had expectations, too. And all along o' you, you nasty little old spoil-sport. You'll have to have that dozen across yer little humped shoulders yet (*swinging knotted end of rope*). Ain't yer ashamed of yerself ? You're a-shakin' all over, I can see by the tawsel of yer nightcap. It's the first time I ever see a judge in a nightcap. I should like to see it drawn a bit lower and this 'ere bit of rope below it. (*Fiercely.*) You hanged my pore old uncle, you did, you cowardly little butcher, a better man than you any day ! His wife and children was fond of him, and that's more than you can say. You ain't got nobody fond of you. What have you got to say ?

GYVES. You argue like all illiterate blackguards of your class. You break the law and then you blame—not the makers, but the administrators of the law. I simply do my duty.

JOE. Do your duty ! yer self-satisfied old humbug ! Why don't you practise what yer preach ? You—you put down crime ? You talk about immorality ? Why, there wasn't a faster little toff in town than you when you was younger. No, and I don't believe there is now. I know yer. I was in that little job down Brompton way, I was—Linden Lodge. Yes, I see you remember. And she wasn't much to look at neither—at least, not to my fancy. You was Mr. Sergeant Gyves then, and I owed yer one, young as I was ; so when we'd collared the swag, I stuck all yer papers on the fire. Lord, weren't you in a quandary next day in court.

GYVES. Oh, that was you, was it, you dog ?

JOE. Yes, guv'nor, that's who it was, and 'ere we are again ! Pore little lady ! We copped all her diamonds and bangles and fal-lals. If you'd been half a chap, you'd a-made it up to her. But not you ! You simply chucked her. So then she married a bettin' man and settled down respectable, and she's doin'

well now, so I'm told, but no thanks to you, you mean little hound.

GYVES. You insolent scoundrel ! I—

JOE. Oh—and talkin' of bettin', I've heard you talk precious big about gamblin' bein' the root of all evil. Why, I've heard the servants talkin' at the bar at the "Faithful Hound." I'm told you play higher than all the toffs in your lot put together. Why, one night, last Summer Sittings, you was playin' bac-carat till it was time to go to court, and you had to borrow a colored tie to drive up the Strand, so as not to show you'd been up all night, you puss.

GYVES. It is not gambling, in the wrong sense of the word, for a gentleman of means to occasionally play with those of his own position for reasonable stakes.

JOE. How do you get yer means, you old thief ? Why, punishin' people for doin' less than what you do. Ugh ! I'd like to make yer get the proclamationag in vice and immorality off by heart—same as the kiddies do their catechisms !

GYVES. Have you finished, sir ?

JOE. Very nearly, Geoffrey. That's a nice little clock on the mantel. (*Examines it.*) Swiss make ? You're all for furrin goods, I notice.

GYVES. Leave that clock alone ! I particularly value it.

JOE. (*opening case*). Given you by your brother mouth-pieces when you was raised. Ha ! Well, carn't 'elp it—your feelin's does yer credit. You turned my pore old uncle off, you know.

GYVES. See, if you'll leave that clock alone, I'll—I'll send you more than the value of it—certainly more than you could get for it—

JOE. Well, I am surprised ! What, 'elp you to compound a felony ? No, no, Geoffrey, you're talking hasty—without thinkin'. (*Pockets clock.*)

GYVES (*aside*). Tut, tut, tut ! Now, where on earth are the police ?

JOE (*roaming about room and annexing swag*). Forks—spoons. Lor' ! what a pity it is pore old uncle ain't alive to see it ! It would be a fair Bank holiday for him. But there, if he was alive, he wouldn't have the same grudge ! Now, then, Geoff, take off them rings, because if I was to help yer, I might hurt yer. I've always had a kind of sentiment about rings. Besides which, I promised my dona a nice gold ring a long, long while ago, and she's a-gettin' impatient. (*Looks round room.*) I think that's all. Them candlesticks is on'y plated. Salt-spoons—ah ! every little helps.

GYVES (*grinning sardonically*). You shall pay for this next time you're brought before me, you impudent villain !

JOE. Here ! Wait a bit ; let's have a look at yer Hounslow

Heath. Now, sit steady. (*Opens GYVES's mouth.*) Dear, dear, dear! Guv'ner, I'm afraid you'll have to lose all these 'ere. Now, don't you wriggle about, else I'll have to give yer chloroform. I 'ave a little drop somewheres about me. (*Takes out artificial teeth.*) This 'ere's good gold, I'll lay a dollar. You'll miss these 'ere over your toast to-morrow mornin'.

GYVES (*toothless*). You dastardly scoundrel! Give me those back! I beseech you to give them back to me. I have to give a judgment to-morrow at ten o'clock.

JOE. Well, if yer can't spout it, you'll have to reel it off on yer fingers. (*Finds box containing robes, which he opens.*) Hullo! What 'ave we 'ere? (*Takes out robes.*) You ain't a-goin' to start a gallanty show, are yer? I was very nearly goin' on the stage myself once, but my relations objected, so I took to housebreakin'. Oh! I see. Blessed if they ain't yer official fakements—your robes and your wig. Now then, Geoffrey, just you slip these 'ere on, just to remind me of old times!

GYVES. Certainly not! I entirely refuse to masquerade for your edification.

JOE. Now, don't be wilful, Geoffrey! I'm afraid it's yer teeth makin' yer fractious! You slip 'em on—just to humor me—else I shouldn't wonder if I 'ave to give yer that dozen after all.

GYVES (*putting on robes*). This cowardly tyranny is almost unendurable!

JOE. Now the wig. (*Removes GYVES's nightcap*). Lor! I never knew before you was bald-headed. Can't you do nothing for it? There—slip on yer wig before yer catches cold.

GYVES (*aside, putting on wig*). Dastardly! Humiliating! (*Aloud.*) Now then, you scoundrel, now that you've filled your pockets with plunder, and heaped your gutter abuse upon me, and compelled me to humor you to the top of your bent—now I trust you will go back to the foul slums from whence you came. I'll pay you out some day for all this, you vile wretch!

JOE. Now just you stow that bad language, 'cos I won't have it, not even from a judge. And you look here. (*Sits himself on the back of a chair, with his feet on the seat, facing GYVES with a look of judicial severity.*) Geoffrey Gyves, you are a man of desperate character. This is not the first time I've had you before me. No—nor yet the second. You're a bald-headed old sinner. You've gambled and you've rushed enough for a dozen. You never did a good turn to anybody in your life, and you never will. There ain't a soul who knows you who don't wish you was dead. There's some of the judges (*shakes his head profoundly*), your companions in guilt, as tries to be gentlemen in so far as their 'orrible course of life will allow. You've never tried to be a gentleman—it ain't in yer. Geoffrey

Gyves, you 'ave to thank yourself for all you've put forward in your favor. In all my experience, I never heard a more abler defence. But in spite of all that, I feel I should be deprecating from my duty if I wasn't to punish yer. The sentence of the court is that you tip us a song and dance before I leaves yer.

GYVES. No, this is too much ! I'd sooner brave anything than submit any further to your insolent suggestions !

JOE (*picks up rope*). You'd better, Geoffrey. Now tip us a song.

GYVES. What preposterous nonsense ! I don't know any song.

JOE. Go on ! You don't tell me ! What used you to sing with your brother mouthpieces when you was on circuit ?

GYVES. That was fifteen years ago. I cannot recall any songs, and I wouldn't if I could.

JOE. Well, you knows the alternative !

GYVES. You blackguard ! Well, I'll see. No, I'm damned if I do !

JOE (*sternly*). Go on, Geoffrey !

GYVES. Well—I—oh, my goodness ! I don't see how I'm to get out of it. Here goes ! (*Attempts.*) "Here's to the maiden !" No, that's too high ! "Here's to the maiden !" No, that's too low !

JOE. Come, get behind it !

GYVES (*toothless and voiceless*).

"Here's to the maiden of bashful fifteen,
Here's to the widow of fifty;
Here's to the flaunting, extravagant queen,
And here's to the housewife that's thrifty."

There now, clear out !

JOE. And is that the best you can manage ? Lord ! you must have cheered 'em up on the wintry evenin's when you was on circuit ! Now, I'll tip you a stave, and mind, you've got to join in the chorus. It's a similar ditty to what you was chanting, on'y different in tune. (*Sings.*)

"Here's to the slavey who's pretty and sociable,
Game as a bantam and keen as a hound !
Here's to the swag which is easily negotiable,
Here's to the copper who sleeps on his round !"

(*Chorus.*)

"Drink up, boys, and be jolly !
'Tis just for the moment we're blowing the swag !
For our lot melancholy
Is half a year's liberty—twenty years lag !

“ Here’s to the jimmy we ply with dexterity,
 Tempered to lever a ton weight or more!
 Here’s to the barker (*produces pistol*) which we’ve the temerity
 Always to sport, though its use we deplore.

(*Chorus.*) “ Drink up, boys, etc.

“ Here’s to the beak who don’t bustle up^g greedily,
 Eager to lag us as long as he dare!
 Here’s to the hangman who does his work speedily,
 When a bloke takes his last leap in the air!

(*Chorus.*) “ Drink up, boys, etc.”

(*At each chorus JOE menaces GYVES with rope, and obliges him to join in, and makes him dance by striking at his slippered toes with the knotted end. At the end of the song and dance GYVES sinks, with a groan, into a chair.*)

JOE. You’ve a nice singin’ voice, Geoffrey, and you’re nimble on your pins. You ought to give a smokin’ concert. I think I must let yer have yer clock back for the song! I shouldn’t get more’n a couple o’ thick ’uns for it from old Mike. (*Replaces clock.*) Now, say thank yer! you ill-mannered little swine!

GYVES. Thank you! I am profoundly obliged to you!

JOE. Now I’ll leave you. I don’t want to tie you up—so give me your word you won’t stir hand or foot for ten minutes—and you can sit as you are.

GYVES. I—I promise!

JOE. Good-bye, Geoffrey. I’ve had a very pleasant evenin’. (*GYVES starts for door, crying, “Help! help!” JOE collars him and brings him back to chair.*) Now, I was afraid I couldn’t trust yer! (*Trusses him with poker and ties him up with rope.*) There now you’re cosey! Don’t be afraid of straining that bit of cord! It’s good Government manila, and its had eighteen stone at the end of it. Pore old uncle! he was a large-hearted man, and a bit bulky. (*Pushes GYVES’s nightcap in his mouth as a gag.*) That’ll keep the cold out better’n all yer false teeth! Good-night, my lord! (*Band plays, “Nix, my Dolly, pals, fake away,” as JOE steals to window.*) “The prisoner thanked the officials for all their kindness.” (*Climbs out of window—puts in his head again.*) “The prisoner left the court without a stain upon his character.”

(EXIT.)

(CURTAIN.)



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